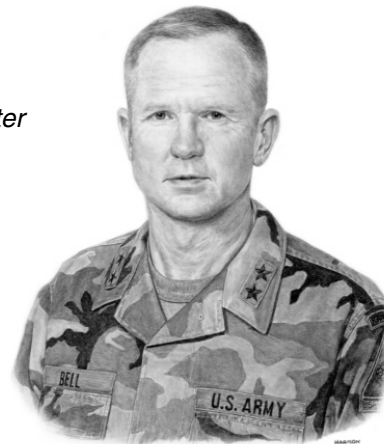


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A Chief of Armor Update: The Combat Armor Badge

In this update, I'd like to address the potential for establishing a Combat Armor Badge. During General Shinseki's Armor Conference briefing, one of the great scout NCOs here at the Armor Center asked him when he, the CSA, was going to approve a Combat Armor Badge. Up front, this was a valid question from an Armor SFC who looks at his Infantry brethren and sees a Combat Infantry Badge and wonders why he too didn't receive a recognition badge for his service in Desert Storm. As you may know, this issue has come up from time to time over the years. There is no single best answer and all sides have sound, defensible arguments. On the surface, the establishment of a CAB would seem to have great value to our force, and would certainly recognize the Armor warriors who have served with distinction in combat when our nation called. However, upon further consideration and as Chief of Armor, I cannot support the establishment of a Combat Armor Badge. Here's why.

There are two overriding arguments that tell me the CAB is not right for our force. First is the potentially divisive nature of such an award, and second is its impact on the overall Army. Let me discuss each of these points.

In my view, the establishment of the CAB could be divisive in the Armor force and create an impression and culture of "haves and have nots." We routinely call on our great Armor and Cavalry warriors to perform a variety of

tough, challenging, full spectrum missions. These range from lethal direct fire combat, to peace enforcement, to peacekeeping, to presence, to recruiting, training, and preparing future warriors for their place in the force. The reality is that all Armor warriors stand ready to serve, and each serves as his Nation calls. Following Desert Storm, we all looked each other in the eye and reflected on the great training and mission readiness of the force. We stood by the principle that our entire Armor force was trained and ready to win the first battle of the next war, and the Desert Storm force did just that. We recognized that those who were not called forward were also trained and ready and would have served with distinction had their units been sent into the combat zone. We all vowed not to penalize those who did not serve in that war — just because they were not called on. I stand by that promise today — not just regarding the Desert Storm force, but regarding the full range of Armor assignments.

I believe that soldiers should stand out and be recognized for their selfless service and performance, not just for the location of their service. Our Army recognizes conduct in combat with a range of appropriate and time-honored medals for valor. We recognize participation in a designated combat operation by authorizing every participant to wear his or her unit's patch on the right shoulder. Should we authorize a CAB for service with a unit in combat, while at the same time minimizing the role of

a cavalry scout in Kosovo, an armor crewman in Bosnia or Korea, a drill sergeant at Fort Knox, or an AC/RC NCO at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, because that is where the Army asked them to contribute to the Nation's national security effort? I for one don't think we should separate the two with a badge, a badge that would address service only, and not necessarily valor or courage in combat. It would create the haves and have nots by inspection of the BDU uniform only. I believe deeply that we should separate the haves from the have nots by reviewing their performance in whatever job the Army sends them to do — not by just inspecting their BDUs.

The second reason I can't champion a CAB is the impact on the Army overall. I don't think the proposal would promote unit cohesion or unity of the combined arms team. Our goal is to forge a cohesive combat team that fights and wins collectively. The CAB proposal would contribute to overriding unit cohesion with personal attributes, and tend to fragment the "have" Armor soldiers from the quality combat support personnel who fight alongside them in war. When we put a recon platoon on the ground in a combat zone, do we recognize the 19D scout with a CAB, then disregard the contribution of the 97B counter-intelligence soldier at his side who is assigned to that same scout squad by TO&E?

Continued on Page 54

COMMANDER'S HATCH from Page 5

In this regard, the establishment of the Armor Badge would likely result in a proliferation of badge proposals from the other branches. If an Armor badge were approved, what about the engineers who are breaching obstacles in conjunction with the scouts — in front of the Armor force and exposed to direct and indirect fire? This initiative could result in a landslide of badge requests, everyone of which would state, "Look what I have above my BDU pocket and what you don't have." Is that really what we want in building cohesive warfighting teams? I hope not.

I believe the environment that led to the establishment of the Combat Infantry Badge in 1943, during World War II, was very different than today. The Army required a larger influx of infantrymen to offset a critical shortage and wanted to provide recognition for the branch that was suffering the largest number of casualties under the worst

conditions. I respect the CIB and those who have earned it. The appropriateness of the CIB is not in my lane. However, today we train and fight in combined arms formations with mutually supportive missions. The reach of enemy weapons systems leaves no one protected and puts most of the brigade combat team's members into a direct fire engagement area.

I honor the warrior NCO who displayed the courage to look the Chief of Staff of the Army in the eye and ask him a very poignant and relevant question, and I fully understand his reasons for feeling that a badge is warranted. As Chief of Armor, I think it's my responsibility to answer the force on this issue straight up. This subject is controversial and will continue to be so. All arguments and points in this debate are meritorious and deserve consideration. I would appreciate hearing from anyone and will certainly take all views

aboard for further assessment. For the time being, however, I do not support the establishment of a Combat Armor Badge.

The staff here at the Armor Center continues to look at the potential for a competency-based evaluation akin to the Expert Infantry Badge. This effort has merit, as it could provide a formal capstone exercise focused on individual skills qualification that has been missing with the loss of the SQT. Given the intensity of our current mission sets, I don't think this is the right time to put an Expert Armor Badge on the table. Nonetheless, the notion of an EAB is something worth serious consideration.

As always, I look forward to hearing from the force on this or any other issue relevant to the branch.

**FORGE THE THUNDERBOLT
AND STRIKE FIRST!**